

# REASONS Humbly offered to the Honourable House of Commons, for a Bill for the better Breeding of Able and Experienced Shipwrights, and for the more Firm and Well Building and Surveying of Ships and other Vessels.

**T**HE Shipwrights of England were first Incorporated for to encourage and Increase Navigation, by a due Observation of their Ordinances, and general Rules of Marine Architecture in all the Rivers and Ports of England and Wales, as well for the Safety of the Lives of His Majesties Subjects, as also the better Security to Owners, Merchants and Adventurers by Sea; both for the Good of His Majesties Service, and the Encouragement of Trade and Navigation in general.

That the Corporation of Shipwrights of England, and Method of Breeding of Able and Experienced Shipwrights; and the general Rules of Marine Architecture, having for many Years past been neglected, sundry Evils of Consequence daily happen by the Unskillful, Deceitful, and Insufficient Building, Repairing, or Fitting out of Ships and Vessels, and thro' incapacitated Persons, that have neither Skill nor Experience, who take upon them to Practice both at Sea and Ashore, in the solid Work of that Art and Mystery; and although the Master-Builders be never so Careful and well Skill'd, yet their Reputations are oftentimes in question, (thro' the Difability of such Persons) and at times of Exigency or Extremity, are ill Instruments of great Disappointment, both in His Majesties and Merchants Service.

For Remedy whereof, a Proposal of additional Heads to Rectifie and Improve the Shipwrights Trade, by Reviving the said Ancient Company, with the Amendments of their Ordinances and General Rules, (which have not been properly considered more than Eighty Years,) has lately been Deliberately Considered and Approved of by Persons Knowing and Experienced in Marine Affairs: And the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, the Commissioners of the Navy, and Corporation of Trinity-House of Deptford-Strand, upon Reference, have Reported their joint Opinion, wherein they approve of the said Proposal, which said Report hath been approved of by His Majesty, and the Right Honourable the Lords of His Majesties most Honourable Privy Council, but cannot be made practicable without an Act of Parliament.

Now in this, as in other Cases of a publick Good, it is common for small Objections arise, and for some time receive Credit; therefore humbly crave Leave to answer some of them, viz.

## OBJECTION.

*That the Owners and Builders of Ships and Vessels, or a particular Builder, may by the Lump, or otherwise, build or fit out to Sea, with their own Estates, what slight or insufficient new or old Ships or Vessels they please; and if some Mariners will not go to Sea in them, nor some Merchants will not venture their Goods in them, there are others that will.*

## ANSWER.

That evil Practice by the Great or Lump (Ex Parte) without Contract or Survey, is too common, and the Arguments often used is true; but with Submission, that Comparison can never hold, to parallel Marine Architecture with particular Estates, and private Bargains in Land Affairs between Man and Man, in regard the Lives of His Majesties Subjects are liable to many greater Hazards, and fatal Misadventures, besides the Ships Cargo is commonly Ten or Twenty times more worth than the Hull.

Therefore the Mariners for their Lives, and the Merchants and Adventurers for their Goods, are more highly concerned in the Firm and Well-building, Repairing and Fitting out of Ships and Vessels, and the Reason is greater: For,

When the Life of any one of His Majesties Subjects is untimely ended by any Casual Accident, there are Juries of Inquisition. How that Life was lost; but if 10, 20, 100, 200, or more of His Majesties Subjects lose their Lives by Deficiency of a Ship or Vessel, when they are enquired after, it's only said, *A Butt Started, Her Leaks Increased, She Founder.* and, *I know not how it was,* or such like large Incredible and Unaccountable Notions.

When the Shipwrights of England are Established, and their General Rules enjoined to be observed, Ships and Vessels will make their Voyages with more Safety, and less Damage to Merchants, than now they do, and His Majesties Customs and Mariners Wages much better secured; and where at this time there is one Owner of Shipping, and Adventurer by Sea, in all Probability there will be five, and Trade and Navigation Encouraged and Encreased.

The several separate Orders and Rules in the Affairs and Government of the said Trade, hath been one great Cause of so many Slight and Deceitful Practices in Marine Architecture, and almost the total Loss of the Breed of Experienced Able Journeymen Shipwrights, at this time so much wanting, to perform the solid Work of the Art and Mystery of a Shipwright both at Sea and Ashore.

## OBJECTION.

*The Owners and Ships Master wholly Rely, and have Confidence in Ships and Vessels contracted for between them and the Builder, and the Opinion or Judgment of a particular Shipwright that they trust to survey her whilst a Building.*

## ANSWER.

It is evident the Owners, and Ships Master, and the Builder, are Parties of separate Interest; and the whole Design of one Party is for making a slight Contract, and for getting as high a Price as he can.

And the other Parties having little or no Skill nor Judgment in the several particular Parts, and Materials for Marine Works, and the Ordinances

and general Rules thereof, do commonly take Presidents from old Indigent Methods, or from Scriveners Contracts, and are for getting the Price as low as they can.

And as for the Master and Owners wholly Reposing their Trust in the Opinion of a particular Shipwright to survey their Ship or Vessel whilst a Building, do with Submission leave it to Judgment, whether it can be believed or supposed, that a particular Journeyman Shipwright will disoblige the Master Builders, where his Reputation, Preferment, and whole Livelihood depends, to oblige the Master of a Ship and the Owners for a small Reward of Day Wages extraordinary, only during the Time the Ship or Vessel is a Building?

And as to the Ships or Vessels that are Built, Rebuilt or Repaired (Ex parte) without any Inspection or Survey whatever, what those principal Materials are, and how the Workmanship has been performed—

Now were the Ordinances and general Rules of Marine Architecture duly observed between the Buyer and the Seller, such Ships and Vessels would then be esteemed valuable in Reputation, and much better accepted

*And with humble Submission in answer to the Objection of a Monopoly.*

1. Upon serious and weighty Consideration the Shipwrights of England were Incorporated, that so Universal and Useful an Art and Mystery should be Improved, and not Monopolized in any one single River, Port, or Harbour in England or Wales, to the great Discouragement of Trade and Navigation in general.

2. Every particular Member of the said Company hath an equal Encouragement and Benefit in the Practice of their Trade in all Rivers, Ports, and Harbours of England and Wales, and in the well Breeding of their Apprentices to perform the solid Work of the said Art and Mystery, both for His Majesties Service, and for Merchants.

3. That the Proposal of Additional Heads to Revise and Amend the Shipwrights of England's Charter, leaves the Master, Owners, and Builder, to their own Discretion, either to Build a Ship or Vessel for Burthen, or for Sailing, according to the Trade or Design they Build for, and their Ordinances and General Rules, when Established, as they have lately been considered and prepared, to prevent Sights, and to suppress the Mystery of Errors and Deceits in the principal Materials of Timber, Plank, Thick Stuff, and Iron Work used in Ships and Vessels, are also of particular Use to the Owners of Woods and Timber, in preserving of Ship-Timber of a due Scantling or Proportion suitable to the Burthen of Ships and Vessels from 1300 Tuns to 30 Tuns, and for converting that which is proper for Plank and Thick Stuff, and then by prevent many great Wastes of serviceable Timber, and more particularly in Inland Counties remote from Navigable Rivers, which cannot be termed a Monopoly, in regard they are of great Benefit to the Publick, being not only useful for the good Order and Improvement of the said Trade in the Rivers and Ports of England and Wales, but also necessary to be Appealed unto, when any Differences arise amongst Persons concerned in Marine Architecture, the Builder and particular Surveyor, having thereby a credible Discharge of their Performance, and the Merchants and Mariners, a true Information and fair Account of the Ships and Vessels wherein they adventure their Lives, Estates and Goods; likewise answers the well meaning and good intent of the several Ancient Statutes for the Growth and Preservation of English Timber.

4. Every particular Member of the said Company have also the same Advantage and Right to a Proportion of the Contributions amongst themselves, and Charitable Gifts, in case of Age, Poverty or Cripples; of which number, by Falls and Bruises, with other Accidents, since the Encrease of Ships and Vessels of great Burthen, both in His Majesty's Service, and in the Service of Merchants, there are Objects of great Pity disregarded, and have no Relief.

It's well known to Mariners, and other His Majesty's Subjects Trading by Sea, That Mens Lives have been lost by Misadventures of Ships and Vessels, and many great Damages have often happened, even in common Seas and Temperate Weather, and by gentle Touches on Sand or hard Ground, and the Reason thereof has never been truly Understood, nor rightly Enquired into.

Therefore to fail or neglect, the only Way and Method to Rectifie and Prevent such known evil Practices, is not only at once to discountenance the Credit and Trade of English Ships, and thereby discourage and lose the Trade of an English Shipwright, and Navigation in general; but is also, and with humble Submission take it to be a Failure in common Justice to Mariners, to Merchants, and other Adventurers by Sea; as to their Lives, their Wages, their Goods and Estates, and to His Majesty in the Revenue of the Customs, and Naval Services.

*And that the said Bill may have a timely and true Explanation, have also offered an Essay in a Fair and Easy Method to have a more perfect Intelligence of Damage, and to prevent many considerable Losses of Ships and Vessels, and extraordinary Damages received from time to time in their Voyages. And these are the Reasons that recommend to your Honours a Nursery to ground a true Knowledge in the Performance of Marine Works. The Foundation and Security of Trade and Navigation. All which is humbly submitted to the Consideration of this Honourable House, by*

John Cocks.

*The World's Effort in common Contracts, has too long an Extent, and generally leaves the most Principal Parts and Materials for the Safety of Men's Lives, &c. in the Dark.*

*And Task-Masters or Undertakers, from a second, third, or fourth Person, &c. is of evil Consequence.*

*Monopoly answered.*

*Owners and Builders left to their own Discretion to build a Ship, &c. for Burthen, or for Sailing.*

*Scantling and Principal Materials not to be less than a suitable Proportion, for the Safety of Men's Lives, Goods, and Estates.*

*To be performed in the River of Thames, and in the out Port, by Adjutant.*

*Of Use to the Owners of Woods and Timber.*

*For Age, and Cripples not Regarded.*

1664.

*In this Affair, no Neglect Rules for a good Foundation and a Regular Discipline, is a Failure.*

*A Joint Opinion Reported and Approved of by His present Majesty King William, That the Shipwrights of England and their Marine Works, be governed by the Order and Rules of one Regular Company.*

*Ships and Vessels built for common Sale, without any Inspection or Survey whatever, of evil Consequence.*

*By the Shipwrights General Rules, all New Ships and Vessels are to be Regularly Surveyed four several times before they be Launch'd or Flated.*

*And old Ships or Vessels to be Surveyed only at such times as the Master, Owners, or Merchants, Require or Call for them.*

*All Surveys in Merchant Service, and also the Master Shipwrights, who are Vouchers of Surveys on Weighty and Extraordinary Occasions in his Majesties Service according to the said Ancient Rules, to be performed upon Oath, that now are only Verbal.*